

GOLD

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YOU ARE GOLD

In October 1983, Blueprint magazine was launched in London at the height of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's Britain. The architect-editors would promote design and architecture through individual personalities, putting faces on covers, and celebrate their design achievements through larger-than-life profiles. This emphasis on the architect-designer as a golden figure would not only help recast architects from collective ideologues into market-based brands; from architect-saviours into designer-superstars, but would also parallel Thatcher's narrative of individual success and talent. More generally, this emphasis capitalized on the culture of money, fame, and celebrity that marked so much of the 1980s, perhaps best encapsulated in the Brit-pop band Spandau Ballet's song 'Gold' released the same year. Yet at the same time, Blueprint would also paradoxically distance itself from the commercial descent of design that Thatcher was simultaneously propagating in her economic policy for British industry. This rejection of Thatcher's enterprise culture came with a twist.

Even though the magazine still circulates today, the first five years of Blueprint's circulation (1983-1988) reveal architectural and design personalities operating at the intersection of political economy and architectural media. It was then that the magazine's editors consciously redirected architecture and design culture (graphic, industrial, interior) out of separate professional domains into a wider cultural context "without the jargon of the professional magazines." In part this was achieved by mixing architectural content with design content. Significantly, all three of Blueprint's co-founders had backgrounds in architecture. British publisher Peter Murray had previously launched the little magazines Megascope and Clip-Kit, among others, and had collaborated with Architectural Design during the late 1960s. Architect Deyan Sudjic, Blueprint's editor between 1983 and 1994, had previously worked for the British Design Council, and art director Simon Esterson, who first laid out the magazine, was moonlighting from the Architect's Journal. All three would put the ideological stakes of British design under a Thatcher government into question graphically and editorially.

This paper, double blind refereed, revised and submitted, was presented at the conference but at the request of the author is not included in these proceedings. Only the abstract is present here.